

# **PRISM** Talent☆Finder

*The online recruitment solution for the 21st Century*

Discover which job candidates have  
**star performance potential**



*PRISM* Talent Finder is a simple, fast yet very accurate online suitability assessment tool that is available globally to help recruit, develop and retain people who have high performance potential.

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## The recruitment challenge

Successful recruitment is fundamentally about doing one thing and doing it well – hiring the right people for the right jobs. The ability to attract, recruit and retain top talent is a key competitive advantage in today's challenging business world. It helps to produce satisfaction, increased productivity and morale, and decreased turnover to make a positive impact on the bottom line.

Clearly, if any organisation is going to excel, it needs to have the right people. But virtually every one of the standard approaches used for selecting those 'right people' is flawed. For example, many companies market recruitment systems that enable recruiters to match candidates against generic job benchmarks. These systems fail to take into account the simple fact that each job is unique. For example, a person who is highly successful in a role in one organisation may be totally unsuccessful in exactly the same role in another company because the work environment is different.

Clearly, the goal for any recruitment strategy should be to attract people who will reach higher levels of productivity in a shorter time-frame and, ultimately, stay with the company longer. Recruiters all know that real success is about getting the right person in the right job first time, every time. In particular, they recognise that to achieve performance excellence in a role, a candidate should be **able** to do the work, **want** to do the work, **enjoy** doing the work and be able to **adapt** appropriately to the



many varying situations presented by the job. However, how can recruiters differentiate between candidates who do well in interviews from candidates who will do well in the actual position? Often they can be mutually exclusive.

In addition, employers face particularly tough challenges in recruiting the right graduate talent. High volumes of applicants, from an increasingly global talent pool, make it difficult to identify the right candidates using traditional, manpower intensive, sifting processes. Furthermore, graduates struggle to find their way to the right employer, potentially finding themselves in the wrong organisation and eventually leaving before achieving their real potential in the role. Indeed, research shows that 1 in 5 graduates apply for jobs that do not match their natural preferences and 1 in 4 graduates leave their first employment within the first 12 months.



While many organisations base their hiring decisions almost entirely on candidate skills, knowledge and experience, there is more to successful 'job fit' than a well-written CV. Even the best qualifications, experiences and skills do not lead to success if they are combined with aptitudes and behaviours that are not matched with the job.

This is not to say that skills don't matter - of course they do - but they are only one part of the overall recruitment equation. The biggest challenge in hiring is not in determining skill - something that is relatively easy to do - but rather in determining whether or not someone is 'suitable' for their role within the organisation and has the potential to deliver performance excellence in the role.

Recruiters are usually comfortable assessing a candidate's, job-related competencies based on CVs, skills testing and interviewing. But correctly identifying the personal characteristics that contribute to high performance is much, much more difficult. Often, recruiters attempt to identify such characteristics by using 'psychological tests'. Unfortunately, there is a lack of understanding about what such tools actually measure and their real relevance to recruitment.

### **Using 'personality' tests for recruitment**

A report, *The Use of Personality Tests as a Hiring Tool*, by Professor Susan Stabile at St John's University, highlights the problem with such tests:

*"Some of the most widely used tests for screening job applicants were not developed for that purpose. For example, the popular Myers-Briggs test was developed not for hiring, but for use in training and development. Additionally, the widely used MMP1 was developed for clinical psychologists to test for personality disorders. This makes their application to the workplace questionable. One reason to question the application of these tests is*

*provided by evidence suggesting that job performance is situationally specific; that is, an employee's environment plays a significant role in influencing the employee's behaviour. This suggests that the assumption underlying the use of personality testing of job applicants-that personality tendencies are transferable from one environment to another - is simply incorrect."*

Another problem is that personality and behaviour are not the same. Professor Robin Stuart-Kotze, the eminent Canadian organisational psychologist who has held Professorships or Visiting Professorships at a number of universities in Canada and at Oxford in the United Kingdom says:

*"The reason that the idea of classifying people by personality types is so attractive is because it means that instead of having to deal with an almost infinite array of differences we only have to deal with a small number. The assumption is that if you fall into a particular personality type you will behave just like everyone else who is that type. It's really not that different from astrology. And as far as predicting or determining performance is concerned, it's about as effective.*

*Personality is a very poor predictor of performance because people are actually highly adaptable and far more flexible than personality typing gives them credit for. Personality tests cannot and do not predict how people will act in a variety of roles or situations. Nor are they able to predict how behaviour changes over time. These are the immutable facts.*

*The proponents of personality tests claim that they make people more sensitive to how they behave, and how other people behave and the result is therefore greater work effectiveness. However, in their book: 'In the Mind's Eye: Enhancing human performance,' Daniel Druckman and Robert Bjork, two eminent psychologists, comment that:*

*"Unfortunately, neither the gains in sensitivity nor the impact of those gains on performance have been documented by research."*



Perhaps the definitive research into the relationship between personality and behaviour was conducted by Columbia University professor Walter Mischel, the well-known clinical

psychologist and former Chairman of the American Psychological Association. Studying the correlation between personality tests and people's actual behaviour, he found that less than 10 percent of the variance in a person's behaviour is explained by personality. The driver of people's behaviour, he observed, is in fact the situations in which they find themselves - and, most importantly, that their behaviour changes as the situation changes.

## Pre-screening candidates

Employers are increasingly using pre-screening assessment early in the recruitment and before the first face-to-face interview. Surveys indicate that more than 80 percent of Fortune 500 companies in the USA - and an ever-growing number of small businesses - now use pre-screening assessments.

In November 2013, Harvard Business Review commented:

“Most companies have a standard hiring regimen: recruiters start by reviewing résumés, move on to phone or face-to-face interviews with the most promising candidates, and then draw on various tests, often including psychometric tests, to determine which applicants are the best fit.

Our research suggests that this approach is backward. Many service companies can reduce costs and make better hires by using web-based psychometric tests as the first screening step. Such tests efficiently weed out the least-suitable applicants, leaving a smaller, better-qualified pool to undergo the more costly personalized aspects of the process.”



The need for online assessment has increased dramatically during the last decade. In 2011, more than 80% of US companies were said to be using online assessment and in Germany 7 out of 10 job applications are submitted in electronic form (Lars Satow). The increasing demand for online assessment is not only driven by generic trends such as globalization and the internationalization of business or the need for cost saving

measures. Online assessment offers substantial advantages over paper-based assessment. With the help of online tests, it is relatively easy to implement worldwide standards for the selection process and to manage the selection process centrally.

An effectively implemented pre-employment screening programme can help reduce turnover and the associated costs by ensuring that only the most suitable candidates are being hired for key vacancies. Bearing in mind that 46% of new employees fail, during the first 18 months, to reach their anticipated potential, while only 19% achieve unequivocal success, the pre-screening assessment of candidates is crucial for helping to identify those individuals who will fit best within the organisation and who are more likely to stay for the long-term (Leadership IQ).

Given that businesses everywhere are seeking better ways to secure the talent necessary for their ongoing success, how can they identify the crucial characteristics that a job requires for performance excellence? The job itself has the solution, so let it provide the answer to what is needed.



### **What are 'star' performers?**

The world's most successful companies understand the importance of building their competitive advantage around the talented people that they employ, rather than relying solely on their specific standing of product offering in the market.

Studies indicate that, on average, a star performer is 85% more productive than an average performer in jobs of medium complexity. A star performer is 127% more productive than an average performer in the most complex jobs (Hunter, Schmidt, and Judiesch 1990). Top performers are, therefore, one of the key drivers for a successful business.

According to *'Smart Business'* (1 July 2014)

*"In some cases, star performers produce 20 or 30 times the average in their fields. And through a combination of skill, passion, drive and energy have the ability to catapult a business to the next level."*

Research led by Professor Herman Aguinis, Kelly School of Business, Indiana University, studied over 600,000 individuals and discovered that in every profession, a fairly significant amount of star performers dominated while the majority fell below the mean. According to Professor Aguinis, the presence of star performers who have the ability to outpace their peers is becoming a staple of the 21st century workplace.

*"You need to create a system so that you know what top performance means in the context of your business, how you measure it and identify who is*

*achieving those levels. Then you need to retain high performers, hire more of them and create systems so these people motivate others to be as good as they are. Following these steps systematically leads to business success.”*

However for any company consistently to recruit top performing people, a precise and scientific method is required to understand, prior to the appointment, whether the person is likely to fit into the relevant role. Top performance is only achieved when the task is aligned with the capabilities and behavioral preferences of the individual.



To begin with the company needs to identify precisely what sets apart its top performers from just good or average performers. A top performer is someone who performs a role in such a way that the outcome matches all expectations and, in fact, regularly exceeds expectations. Indeed, a top performer is someone who continuously, and even dramatically, exceeds the expectation that is normally met by other successful people.

The key question is where to find such people. However, the challenge is not so much in simply finding them. The challenge is that success is not dependent on simply finding a successful person. Success is somewhat more complex. Success in the workplace only materializes when the task, the capabilities and preferences of the individual, and the working environment match in such a way that the person's talents, skills, and potential can grow.

If recruiters think about the individuals who work in their organisation, it is very likely that they will be able to identify easily a number of star performers who consistently produce higher results than others who are in the same role. They are easy to spot and are usually the ones who tackle each day and its opportunities and challenges with consistent energy and engagement. In sales organisations, it is common for performers to generate 30-50 percent or more of the revenue.

It follows that one of the most effective and efficient way to capture models of optimal performance is to focus on current star performers. These are the individuals who have established approaches to their work that consistently produce the desired accomplishments at a high level. They currently are operating within the same organisational structure and culture as the rest of the employees, yet these individuals have found ways to exceed the organisation's expectations

The key point here is that it is not just what people have that makes them successful; it is what they do with it that matters. It follows therefore, that one of the best approaches to recruiting is to identify what the best performers are doing differently from those individuals who are either good performers or poor performers, and the recruit people who possess the same characteristics as the star performers. In other words, the organisation can regard these top performers as internal job benchmarks.

### **The importance of job benchmarking**

The benefits of using job benchmarking as part of the recruitment process have been well summed up by *'The Business Times'* (4 March 2014):

*"The benefits of job benchmarking for hiring new talent are numerous and powerful. Studies have shown that when done correctly, productivity improves 30 percent and retention increases 50 percent. Productivity rises because the person's behaviors and competencies align well with the requirements of the job. Retention increases because personal motivators match the necessary motivators for the position. Symmetry between the job and new hire takes job performance and team member satisfaction to new heights.*

*The rewards of job benchmarking to the company, its team members and customers are inescapable. As biases are removed and clarity and alignment created, the door to successful hiring appears.*

*If you want to hire and retain top talent and increase your team's productivity, the highly accurate and extremely useful process of job benchmarking could be just what you need and what you've have been searching for."*



### **What is PRISM Talent Finder?**

**PRISM Talent Finder** is a simple, fast, yet very accurate job suitability assessment tool that helps recruiters hire, develop and retain people with high performance potential.

It uses a unique web-based system to create a profile of the behavioural strengths, work aptitudes and work environment preferences of the 'top performers' in each role. The

combined profiles of each group of successful people are then analysed to produce a benchmark for the role, statistically verified to ensure that these people do indeed all share certain characteristics in a congruent manner. **PRISM Talent Finder's** online process uses such benchmarks to pre-screen the available talent pool and find those candidates who best fit the job.

Of course selecting and appointing the right person is only part of the recruitment process. Effectively developing new hires is equally important for recruitment success. **PRISM Talent Finder** users can also download a '**career development plan**' that identifies any shortfall that the candidate needs to focus on to achieve performance excellence in the role. The report is presented in such a way that it can be used for ongoing personal development purposes

There are two main ways of using **PRISM 'Talent Finder'**:

- (1) using the job benchmark planner or
- (2) using the fully automated job benchmark process

**The job benchmark planner** is appropriate if the role is a new one, or if there are very few other employees carrying out the same role within the organisation.

**The fully automated process** is appropriate if a substantial number of employees are already carrying out exactly the same role within the organisation. For example, the organisation should be able to identify a number of star performers, good performers and under performers in the role. This process is particularly important for 'mission critical' roles - those that have the highest impact on the success of the organisation.

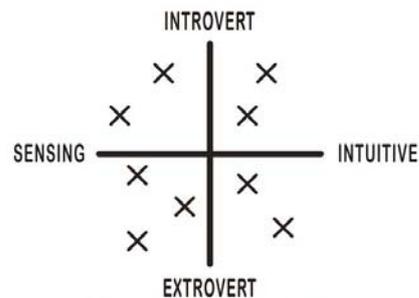


**PRISM Talent Finder** recognises that skills, knowledge, education and experience alone do not predict job success. It is equally important to identify if the candidate is well suited for the job. This means that we need to look for people who enjoy doing the activities that need to be done and have the aptitude for such work. In other words, who are the candidates motivated to do such work? It is said that employees who enjoy more than 70% of their work activities are three times more likely to succeed than those enjoy less than 70 per cent of their work activities.

It is true that a candidate cannot be competent in a job without good eligibility. Eligibility means that they can do the job. To progress from simple competence to star performance they also have to be 'suitable'.

Suitability means that they will perform the job to a very high standard because they enjoy the activities required by the role. In other words, they want to do the work and will adapt their natural strengths appropriately to achieve performance excellence in the role. Despite this, a candidate can still under-perform in a role because they lack the necessary motivation. Employees can become **de-motivated** for a variety of reasons such as the organisation's culture and relationships with line managers.

When creating a job benchmark, recruiters need to begin by identifying the outcome they expect if star performance in the role is to be achieved. What does star performance look like in this role? How will it be measured? In other words, **start with the required outcomes in mind and work backwards**. Recruiters need accurate, reliable data. This is where **PRISM Talent Finder** is particularly valuable. Measuring and assessing suitability need no longer be an issue for recruiters in the light of advances in assessment technology used by **PRISM**.



A job benchmark is about defining a job in terms of the **critical factors** that the post-holder must deliver to a high standard if performance excellence is to be achieved. These are the 'must haves'. It follows that measurements must be defined for these activities. Recruiters must decide how they will measure and validate job performance. What does star performance look like and how does it differ from just good performance?

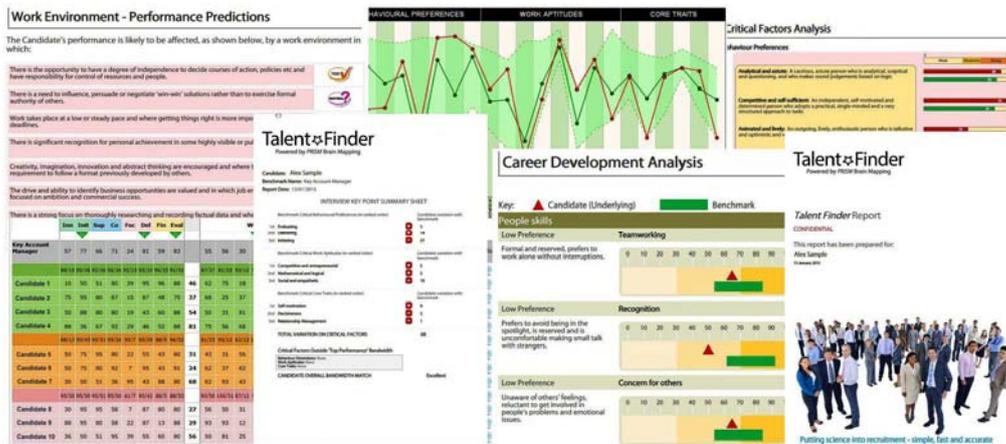
Creating a good job benchmark is the first and essential step in hiring the right person for the role. This is not simply about describing the job; it is about identifying the success DNA for the job. Clearly defining these key elements of success will also help to communicate clearly the performance expectations to the candidate.

For each critical activity it is important to identify the relevant behaviours, aptitudes, interests and work environment preferences required if the candidate is to achieve performance excellence.

It is particularly important that recruiters avoid the temptation to produce a job benchmark from the perspective of their own personal preferences; instead, they should approach job

benchmarking systematically using the **PRISM Talent Finder** process. Over the years, popular commercial ‘personality tests’ have been classified into two main groups: ‘normative’ tests and ‘ipsative’ tests.

This ‘ipsative’ versus ‘normative’ debate has been going on for at least 40 years and many psychometricians are still as entrenched as ever in their opposing views of the two methods. It is easy to understand why so many lay people are bewildered and cynical about the merits of psychometric assessments when it would appear that the ‘experts’ do not agree on some fundamental issues.



Setting aside the debate on the ‘ipsative’ ‘normative’ debate, the key issue about assessments is the **output**, not the **input**. In other words, does the instrument do what it is supposed to do?

**PRISM** does not take sides in the debate between the relative merits of ‘ipsative’ and ‘normative’ instruments: it provides outputs based on both measurements. Should users require it; the instrument can combine both outputs to provide a ‘nipsative’ output. To minimise the potential negative impact of ‘social desirability’, it contains a social desirability distortion scale to determine whether an accurate judgment can be made based on the candidate’s responses.

**What outputs does PRISM Talent Finder provide?**

**PRISM Talent Finder** provides a range of reports for both candidates and recruiters. The reports can be formatted to contain some or all of the following:

A report (‘Best Fit’) listing in order the extent to which all the candidates fit the job benchmark

A 'DNA' chart for each candidate showing the extent which he or she matches the critical dimensions of the job benchmark.

An interview key point summary sheet highlighting the extent to which the candidate matches the 'critical' factors of the role. This summary sheet is very valuable during the interview process.

A report showing each candidate's top three dimensions in 'behavioural strengths, work aptitudes and core traits compared to the relevant job benchmark requirements.

A report showing which work environments are most likely to enhance or inhibit the candidate's performance.

A report showing how the candidate's career development strengths match the benchmark for a range of work activities. This chart is ideal for identifying what further development the candidate may need to undertake to achieve performance excellence in the role.

### **Why does PRISM measure behaviour and not personality?**

Professor Robin Stuart-Kotze, highlights the key differences between personality and behaviour as follows:

*"It's what you do (behaviour) that determines your performance, not what you are (personality). It is absolutely critical not to confuse behaviour with personality. To repeat: personality is what you are; behaviour is what you do, and it's what you do that makes a difference.*

*However, most people believe that personality determines how individuals act, and it's very difficult to shake that belief."*

*A critical difference between behaviour and personality is that a person's personality is essentially fixed at an early age and after that it changes relatively little. But although people cannot easily change their personality, they can change what they do. The major determinant of performance is behaviour. Personality gets the headlines because people would like to find a secret key to success that does not require work and effort - hence the popularity of 'personality tests'.*

**PRISM Talent Finder** creates suitability benchmarks by analysing and validating the behavioural characteristics of individuals who have consistently achieved performance excellence in specific roles. The fully automated benchmark creation process is unbiased and

therefore avoids common pitfalls of other solutions that use arbitrary or industry generic benchmarks.

By using **PRISM Talent Finder** to match candidates to benchmarks, organisations can make scientifically informed hiring decisions rather than subjective ones.

Professor Stuart-Kotze points out:

*"Make no mistake: there is a specific set of behaviours that will produce optimal performance in every job. All that is needed is a mechanism that will enable organisations to identify that set of behaviours."*



**We believe that *PRISM* Talent Finder provides such a mechanism!**

### Further reading list:

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There is no need to gamble with recruitment. Management guru, Peter Drucker, has pointed out, the stakes are very high:

*"Chances are good that up to 66% of your company's hiring decisions will prove to be mistakes in the first 12 months."*

Are you keen to improve your organisation's bottom line results by hiring only those candidates who have the potential to be 'star' performers?

If so, would you like to be able to identify and measure exactly what sets apart your current 'star' performers from those who are average or poor performers in your key roles?

Finally, would you like to be able to use that data to pre-screen candidates and correctly identify those whose work preferences most closely match those of your 'star' performers?

For further information, please contact us at:

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